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TAGS: [ECON](#) [ELAB](#) [GJ](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER MITCHELL RESHUFFLES GRENADA CABINET

Classified By: DCM Mary Ellen T. Gilroy for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: At a May 6 New National Party (NNP) rally, Prime Minister Keith Mitchell announced a change in several cabinet portfolios, including the creation of a new ministry, effective May 15. He did not call parliamentary elections, as had been widely expected. His decision caught the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC), which had been preparing for new elections, by surprise. The cabinet reshuffle may bring some welcome changes to Grenada's government, especially in the areas of economic development and trade. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Although Grenada's elections are not constitutionally due until November 2008, rumors were rife that Mitchell would call elections shortly after Cricket World Cup (CWC), assuming it was a resounding success. With the CWC generally viewed as a disappointment in Grenada and the region, combined with increasing gasoline prices and the looming reinstatement of the unpopular value added tax on October 1, Mitchell revised his strategy and settled for plan B, a cabinet reshuffle. He made his announcement at a May 6 NNP rally, surprising many Grenadians, and especially the opposition NDC.

¶3. (C) Having completely misread the political tealeaves, the NDC had spent the previous several weeks preparing for early elections. NDC leadership has been hammering away at the Mitchell government for its alleged failures, including the CWC. Their miscalculation and surprise were the likely cause of their nearly 24-hour "radio silence." When the NDC finally recovered, they tried to spin the cabinet reshuffle as a "reflection of a deepening crisis within the government."

¶4. (U) Mitchell's cabinet reshuffle and the creation of a new ministry will take effect on May 15, 2007. The new cabinet line-up is as follows (Note: A copy of the new cabinet portfolios was e-mailed to WHA/CAR and Embassy Bridgetown on May 9. End Note.):

a) Prime Minister Mitchell will also serve as the Minister for Finance. Mitchell did not say whether he will appoint a junior minister to run the day-to-day operations at the Finance Ministry, as he has done with the two other ministries in his portfolio, national security and youth development. (Comment: Neither of the current two junior ministers in the PM's Ministry appear to be qualified to handle Finance. End Comment.)

b) Brenda Hood: Minister of Communication, Works and

Transport (formerly Minister of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Culture and Performing Arts).

c) Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Minister of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Culture and Performing Arts (formerly Minister of Communication, Works and Transport).

d) Elvin Nimrod: Minister for Foreign Affairs, Attorney General, and Minister for Carriacou and Petit Martinique Affairs. He will lose the Ministry of Legal Affairs, and his International Trade portfolio will move to the newly created Ministry of Economic Development and Planning.

e) Claris Charles: Minister for Education and Labour will add the Ministry of Legal Affairs to her portfolio (also the NNP Secretary).

f) Einstein Louison: Minister in the Prime Minister's Ministry (i.e., Junior Minister) with responsibility for National Security. He loses the Business and Private Sector Development portion of his portfolio to the new Ministry of Economic Development and Planning.

g) Anthony Boatswain: Minister for Economic Development and Planning (former Minister of Finance). His newly created ministry will handle: business and private sector development, domestic and international trade, and concessions. It will incorporate the Grenada Industrial Development Corporation (GIDC), the Micro Enterprise Unit, and the Physical Planning Unit from the former Ministry of Finance.

COMMENT

¶15. (C) Facing a string of unfavorable economic news, Mitchell calculated that he would have a hard time holding on to his one seat majority in parliament if he called early elections. Catching the opposition flat-footed will give Mitchell some reprieve, especially since the NDC spent so much political capital convincing their supporters that early elections were inevitable. The cabinet reshuffle may also bring some welcome changes. Assuming the creation of the new Ministry of Economic Development and Planning is well thought out and implemented, having a minister focused on trade and economic development issues could be a positive development. Several local business leaders have told Charge that they would love to see clearer standards for planning purposes, as well as consistent enforcement. Boatswain is well regarded and considered to be relatively honest and fair, but he is also quite shy. He has a reputation for being incorruptible, which should be an asset, but it remains to be seen whether he can not only assume control of the undoubtedly lax physical planning unit, but bring it up to snuff.

¶10. (C) The stated reason for reducing Elvin Nimrod's responsibilities was to allow him to devote more time to Carriacou and Petit Martinique affairs (his home constituency). When trade was part of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there was one trade officer who tried to do everything, not very successfully, and Nimrod was not especially interested. He may also not have liked the managerial aspects of running the Ministry of Legal Affairs. He is, however, a lawyer, which Claris Charles is not, and so retains the Attorney General (AG) position. There have been a number of snide comments made on local talk shows that Nimrod will actually let Special Advisor to Cabinet Hugh Wildman do all the AG work. Mitchell tried to appoint Wildman, a Jamaican by birth but citizen of Grenada, as AG last year but was rebuffed by Parliament. (Note: Wildman is in the final stages of receiving a U.S. immigrant visa in Kingston. End Note.) Claris Charles has demonstrated excellent managerial ability at the Ministry of Education and Labour. She is very dynamic and likes a challenge. Charles is disliked in some quarters for being too strong a woman and she can be abrasive. However, she is probably the most competent minister Mitchell has.

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